

51 Practical Ways for Law Firms to Add Value

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"Adding value" is a difficult concept for literal-minded lawyers to wrap their minds around. What is known is that law firms that do add value to a client relationship will get hired over and over again. The following list of 51 tactics to add value was developed by the Law Firm Value Committee¹, composed of representatives from eight major law firms. This document is also available on the website of the [Association of Corporate Counsel](http://www.AssociationofCorporateCounsel.org).

1. Conduct a pre-matter planning session before every major matter to ensure that the attorneys and the client are aligned regarding goals, objectives, outcomes, fees, communications, updates, team members, etc.
2. Conduct an end-of-matter review with the client at the conclusion of a significant matter, or as needed during the course of a significant matter as a checkpoint.
3. Work with the firm's financial group to develop accurate and timely data to understand costs and benchmark efficiencies. Provide ongoing, real-time access to matter details such as actual cost vs. budget and work in progress. Utilize an integrated financial dashboard to analyze historical, current and planned pricing per client, matter and attorney in real time.
4. Build in common benchmarks (e.g., number of days a matter should be in a particular phase to track progress as well as warning signals) and establish cycle time expectations jointly with clients for phases of matters and processes.
5. Assign professional project managers to manage large-scale engagements and teams.

¹ Chair, Kristine Sudholz, Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP
Abbey Orlofsky, Axiom
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6. Institute a discipline of process mapping and data analysis (such as “lean six sigma”) to monitor efficiencies in all areas of work and institute "kaizen" (continuous improvement) programs where internal and external work groups gather and align processes for efficiency and productivity.
7. Use extranets, project management tools and other technology to provide a more efficient matter management approach and better client service delivery.
8. Conduct matter management projections and analyze various staffing scenarios to maximize service efficiency.
9. Educate the attorneys and staff on how they can add value at the practice group and individual level, including training, assisting with value-based fee structures, developing technology tools and other client-centric programs. Consider developing a value taskforce to assist with this effort.
10. Create partner roles focused on driving change and enhancing the value and efficiency of client service, such as Managing Partner for Innovation, Managing Partner for Client Relationships, Managing Partner for Quantitative Performance and Chief Client Service Officer. These partners should be part of the firm's senior management team and should meet regularly with the chairman and heads of the practices and regions.
11. Publish your network of "known" counsel in other jurisdictions and share it with top clients.
13. Ask clients to share their own strategic visions, so the firm can properly plan, invest and staff, etc. to meet the future needs of its clients.
14. Develop a standard knowledge base (real-time database source on the intranet for top clients) to share what the firm knows about the clients' businesses and what's in the news about the clients.
15. Develop a know/don't know analysis of the firm's awareness of the client. Use this to determine what the firm needs to learn and who the firm needs to know at the client in order to have a complete understanding of their business.
16. Hire a trainer from a company recognized for customer service to provide service excellence training to the firm's lawyers and staff.
17. Connect clients to other clients and entities in the firm's network (at no charge).
18. Include client relationship activities, adoption of alternative billing models and support of the firm's client service programs as explicit criteria for partner compensation decisions.

19. Conduct a focus group of clients to help the firm establish a guiding set of firmwide client service standards. Publish these standards and use them to create professional development programs.
20. Conduct annual meetings with key clients to discuss clients' goals and "stay-awake" issues, firm's performance, changes needed and future business considerations.
21. Engage a third-party consultant to conduct in-depth client satisfaction surveys. Using a third party can help identify issues and challenges that clients might be reticent to discuss with someone from the firm.
22. Have clients regularly present to firm lawyers on do's and don'ts, best practices, etc.
23. Conduct brainstorming sessions with clients and small groups of firm lawyers (who do not typically work on their matters) regarding the firm's client service and value.
24. Assign a mid-level associate to work two half-days per week at the client's office for little or no charge.
25. Assign each of the firm's summer clerks to work in the client's law department for a week or two at no charge to the client.
26. Take a tour of the client's office, plant or facility.
27. Request periodic access to/meetings with the client's business people to better understand the business, as opposed to the legal challenges faced by the client.
28. Conduct joint training sessions with clients' business people or lawyers (e.g., training on HR topics with both firm and client HR personnel attending).
29. Enhance the relationship partner's role to become a Relationship Manager "Plus"—attend the client's internal legal department meetings, and work on-site several times a year, all at no charge.
29. Create client service teams (each comprised of the partners, associates, paralegals, secretaries and staff who serve that specific client) and have the teams meet quarterly or monthly to discuss the client's business, current and potential matters, changes at the client, trends in the client's industry, etc.
30. Develop a service plan for clients that details the annual client visit, quarterly substantive events, and follow-up.
31. Sign up for electronic news alerts on the firm's top clients and report to client teams.
32. As part of lateral partner integration, develop an on-boarding process whereby the new client team member can get up to speed quickly on the client—at no cost to the client. In addition to training on the client's business, include an overview of how the

legal department works, preferred communication methods, any special terminology and important departmental protocols.

33. Have client teams conduct interviews with all client stakeholders-individual attorneys in the legal department, the GC and any related business people—to understand how value is defined by the client (at no cost to the client).
34. For top clients, publish on the intranet an internal client analysis/overview of each client's business, issues and goals. Enable the client to participate on the site using social media tools to give feedback, updates, etc., on their business.
35. Become familiar with and use alternative fee arrangements including, but not limited to:
 - Fixed fees for matters—with or without a safety valve.
 - Milestone formulas—fixed fees for stages of the matter.
 - Task-based and risk/reward billing (contingencies, etc.).
36. Create an alternative fee handbook complete with real-life examples, fee structures, worksheets and other best practices and distribute it internally.
37. Allow for value-based billing for top clients. Value-based billing allows clients to adjust bill amounts up or down based on what they think the legal service rendered was worth to them.
38. Commit to clear and transparent fee structures by showing the client what tasks are required at each step in the process of the matter, the timekeeper who will perform those tasks and the allotted time for each.
39. Conduct margin-per-hour analysis of services provided by practice, client and rate structure to provide clients with custom project pricing.
40. Create associate professional development programs to include client service, leadership and matter management training.
41. Consider professional development requirement versus billing requirements for first-year associates to provide them with more mentoring with an emphasis on the realities of the legal profession and a client service focus.
42. Consider tiered associate advancement (vs. lock-step) which requires attainment of specific competencies in order to advance.
43. Engage clients in the training process—invite them to make presentations and have dialogue with associates about the in-house/ outside counsel relationship.
44. Create a training program where associates work at the client's facilities to learn the in-house perspective (at no charge or a nominal fee).

45. Set up an extranet for on-line training that is available to both the firm and the firm's clients.
46. Leverage extranet/ share-point capabilities to provide a one-stop service for clients for all legal work.
47. If the firm has a library, review its functions with a goal of better support of client service initiatives.
48. Develop a client dashboard that includes metrics, in addition to a 360-degree view of all matters.
49. Use e-billing systems to track performance against metrics.
50. Install financial system analytics to track efficiencies and client billing cycles over time and make improvements as necessary.
51. Assign individual library resources to monitor specific clients and industries.

For more on this topic, call:

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